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LANGUAGE LAB: GESTURE DRIFT

Gesturing while you talk (even while on the phone) can make your thoughts easier to understand, because it takes some of the pressure off your language brain to choose absolutely the best word, which doesn't really matter usually. Of course this works because gesture isn't a language, it's more like a sauce or shade. Nonetheless there are gestural words- gestures with a more or less fixed meaning, and like all words, their meanings can change in context and over time.

A-OK

This gesture means "A-OK" or "everything's great"- way above "OK"- firmly into "good", on into "yes, definitely" or even "perfect". In deep sea diving and live sound engineering, the A-OK is preferred to the thumbs up, which can be misconstrued as "let's go up" or "turn it up" or "[something something] up". In certain contexts the A-OK can also mean "zero" (still keeping the concept of perfection). In multiple non-contiguous sections of the world, it means "asshole". In the Arab world it is a looking glass that you show someone, meaning "you will see [what happens when you fuck with me]". In Europe if you put the A-OK up to your face with your nose sticking out the circle, it means "drunk". In Japan it means "zero" or "money". In American Sign Language it means "9".

Essentially the A-OK is the inverse of "the finger", and like any member of a dichotomy, it can also mean its opposite, which is useful in situations where you need to tell someone off, but also need a certain deniability. Like if someone tells you what to do, and you flash them the A-OK, you're aquiescing to their demands in an overly-agreeable manner, one that flops semantically back to "fuck off", while keeping all the trappings of politeness. In many situations this is a good way to have your meaning made clear and not get beat up, and also dispel the tension that can result from an angry and possibly one-sided encounter. Uh, we should restate that the A-OK still means "perfect".

NB: the origin of the phrase "OK" is still disputed, but the origin of "A-OK" (in spoken form, not as a gesture) can be traced definitively back to NASA's Project Mercury.

THE FINGER vs THE PEACE-OUT

The finger, aka Digitus Impudicus, aka "The Bird", is a gesture whose meaning is probably quite clear to all readers of Mothers News. A slow and casual development has been the finger's gradual slide (via "total freedom") into peace sign territory. When something exciting happens at the Mothers News office, be it the Platters on the radio or cookiesmell on an open breeze, it's bird bird bird, bird is the word. The wand, the active principle. Similarly the peace sign (via "peace out") has turned somewhat malevolent, and has come to mean "I'm done with this / you". As with the A-OK, these gestures still maintain their original "fuck you" and "sell me weed" meanings.

METAL HORNS

With hip hop the dominant form of pop music, and rock music calcified to an archaism, what of metal? Now that the "rock hand" gesture has changed meaning from "I am in league with Satan" to "display of enjoyment for this music", whither the metalheads? In rejection of trends and waves of co-option, metalheads have gotten more refined, and reserved in mode of dress. And what was once their salute, the familiar "devil horns" gesture, has also gotten more reserved. No longer splayed out like an explosion, the new devil horns is presented with the thumb neatly tucked in, and the index and pinky finger parallel. More often than not the display is made with the back of the hand facing front. With the exception of this last detail, the gesture has become identical to the "P-Funk salute" of intergalactic funk band Parliament Funkadelic. The P-Funk salute shoots funk beams into the sky to summon the Mothership, and permits entry once the ship has arrived. The connection between these two groups isn't really out of line, as both metal and P-Funk deal with: fertile darkness, not belonging where you currently are, and being a warrior. NB: the metal horn sign, old and newer variant, still mean "two outs" in baseball.

STILL ON THE EDGE OF MEANING

- double middle finger air quotes
- hula hooping with no hula hoop
- "the other finger" (the ring finger)



MOTHERS TOP TEN

in no order

1. THE ULTIMO - I stopped by Josh's work and saw this post-it note was on this CD. "We listened to this yesterday and Gary really liked it, so he asked me to write that so he'd remember 'which one is THE ULTIMO'". That was a year ago, but I thought about this yesterday while listening to Pharaoh Sanders "Karma".

2. HELLHAMMER - great stupid metal, kind of a perfect band...

3. REMOTE OUTPOSTS - Greg Harvester's excellent music blog of tapes from his excellent collection. Crucial units from ONION FLAVORED RINGS, GRUMPIES, IMPRACTICAL COCKPIT, TEM EYOS KI, and waaaaay more. Cram the pod full! Remoteoutposts.blogspot.com

4. I SAW A UFO - It was the night of the storm, when the power went out, me and Satchmo were playing cards on the lawn until the sun went emphatically down and we couldn't see what the cards were anymore (satisfying nostalgic feeling). Then we were on the hood of the car looking at more stars than usual, then I saw a little red light very far away that slowly drifted, then zagged impossibly before peacing. Corroborated by Satchmo and Nicky Revs, also seen by Alex the Dancer, who was a few blocks away at the time. I'm not saying it was a flying saucer- it was just a FO that was U. The main moment feeling was of is this real.

5. ARE YOU READY FOR THE SEX GIRLS? by GLEAMING SPIRES - really cool song, really weird totally SFW video. I probably had this song in my head for a full third of the month.

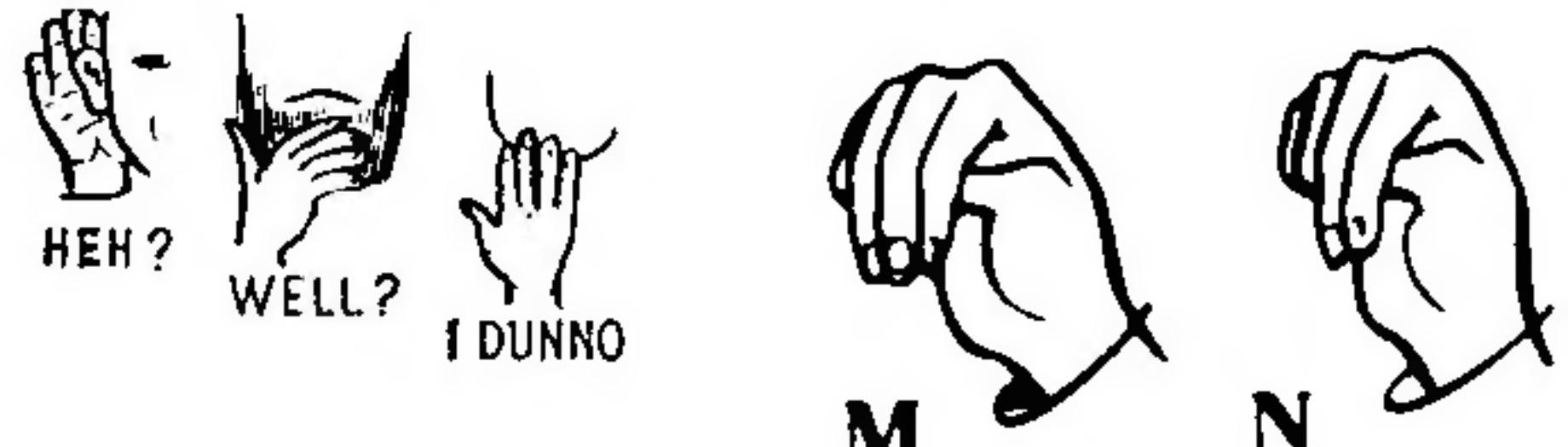
6. CLEANSING WAVE - great crust band from Worcester with HEAAAAAVY reverb vocals and WAAAAAAAY flanged guitars, two factors that contribute to the "complete obliterating wave" feel.

7. VAN MORRISON contractual obligation record - Van the man in the early stages of his career, getting out of a contract dispute by showing up drunk and cutting 31 excellent off the cuff pop songs one after another. The record works as a larger piece as well, starting off with 5 standard-style dance tunes ("Twist and Shake", "Shake and Roll", "Stomp and Scream", "Scream and Holler", and "Jump and Thump"). By track 9 the songs are getting personal against the recording staff ("Hold On George", "Here Comes Dumb George", "Goodbye George"). And there is also the perfect amount of actual nonsense ("you say france and i'll whistle") to make you feel like the singer is not without his passions. A great document, and a really fun record. Look for "new york sessions 1967"

8. NOT HAVING LYME DISEASE - I was just just regular New England Summer Crazy! Thanks Carmen for the painless, worryfree test!!!!!!

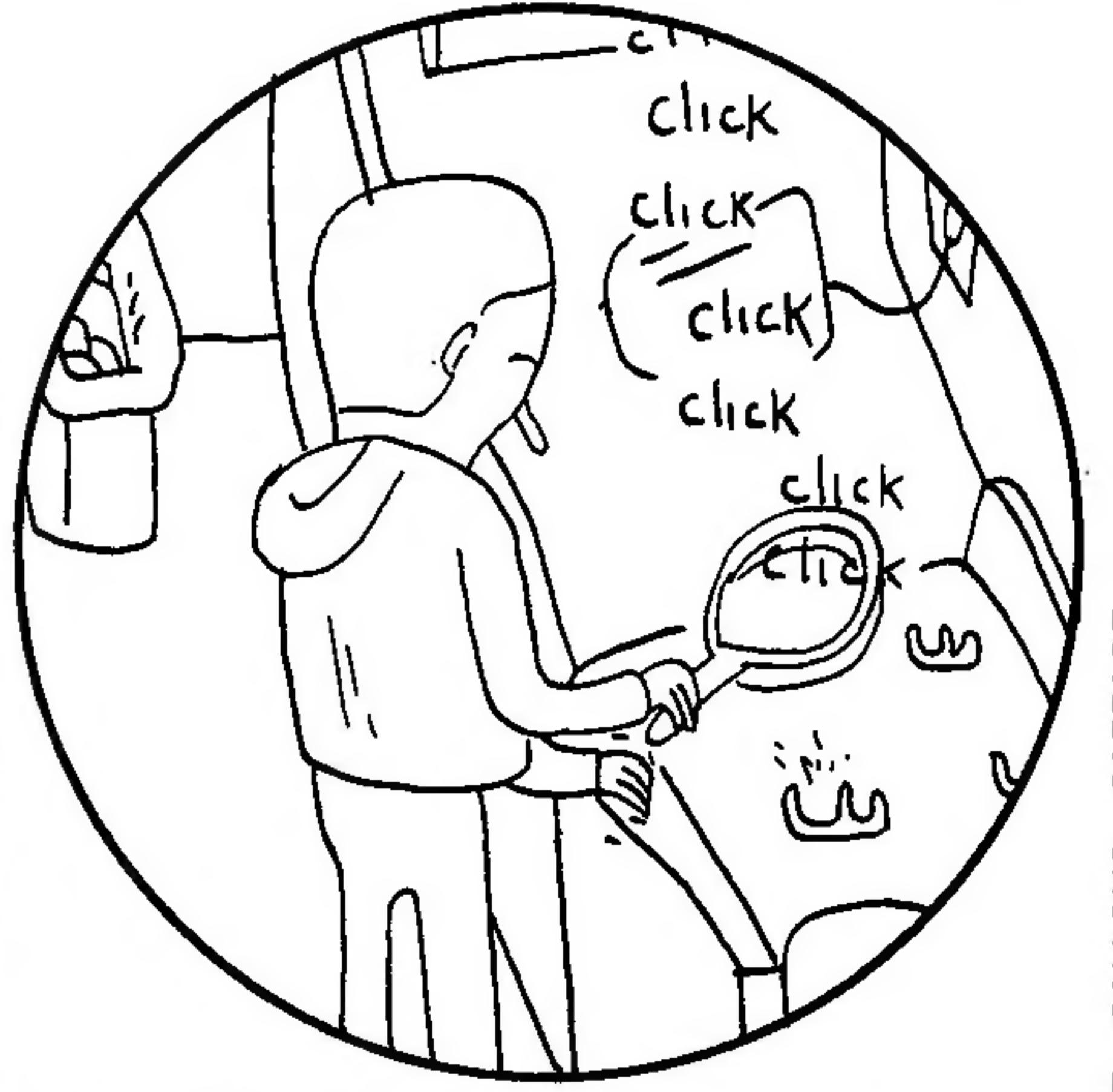
9. WORK/DEATH at CITY EFFECT at 2am - a good solid set, and a great experience while I was really tired. I laid down on the ground, then the set ended and I was in bed within 15 minutes.

10. EARTHQUAKE - I thought it was people having sex.



THE AMBROSE BIERCE MEMORIAL WORD JUMBLE

by Ambrose Bierce before he died



MNILOCSOUOP The eloquence of power.



YEETMERC An isolated suburban spot where mourners match lies, poets write at a target and stone-cutters spell for a wager.



ECKOTP The cradle of motive and the grave of conscience.



last month's answers: ROMANCE CALLOUS CABBAGE

OFFICIAL INFORMATION

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RAY JOHNSON

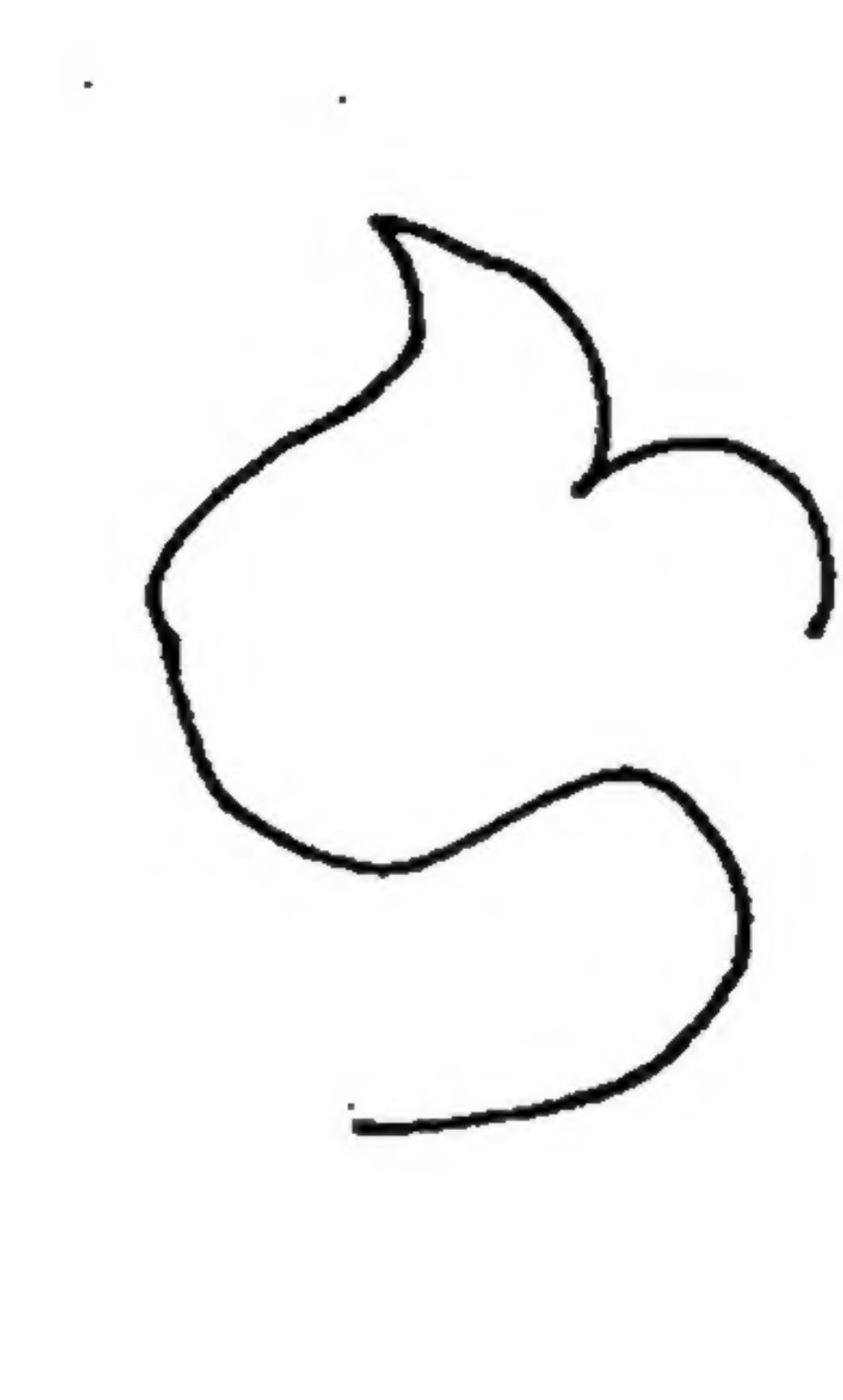
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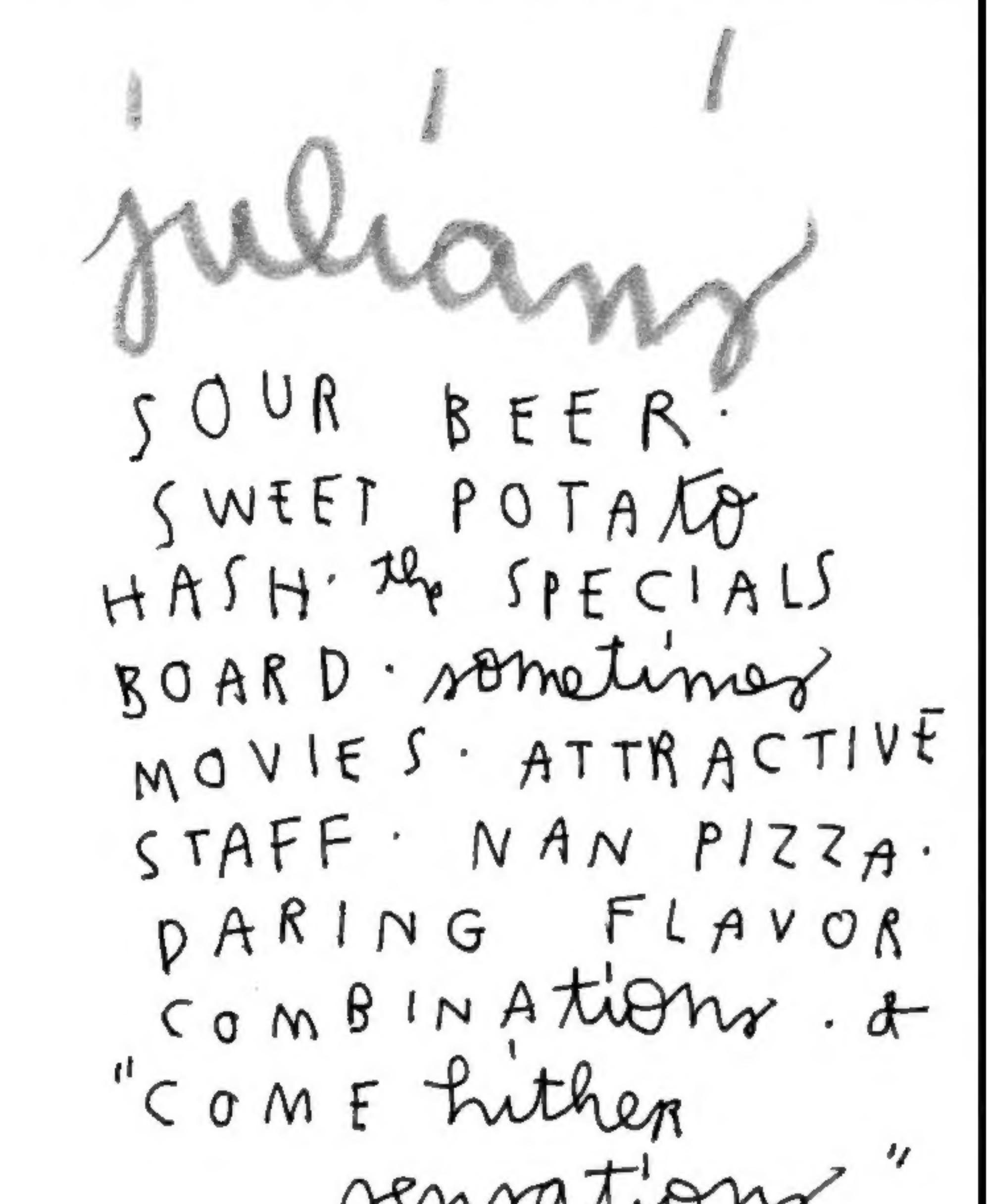
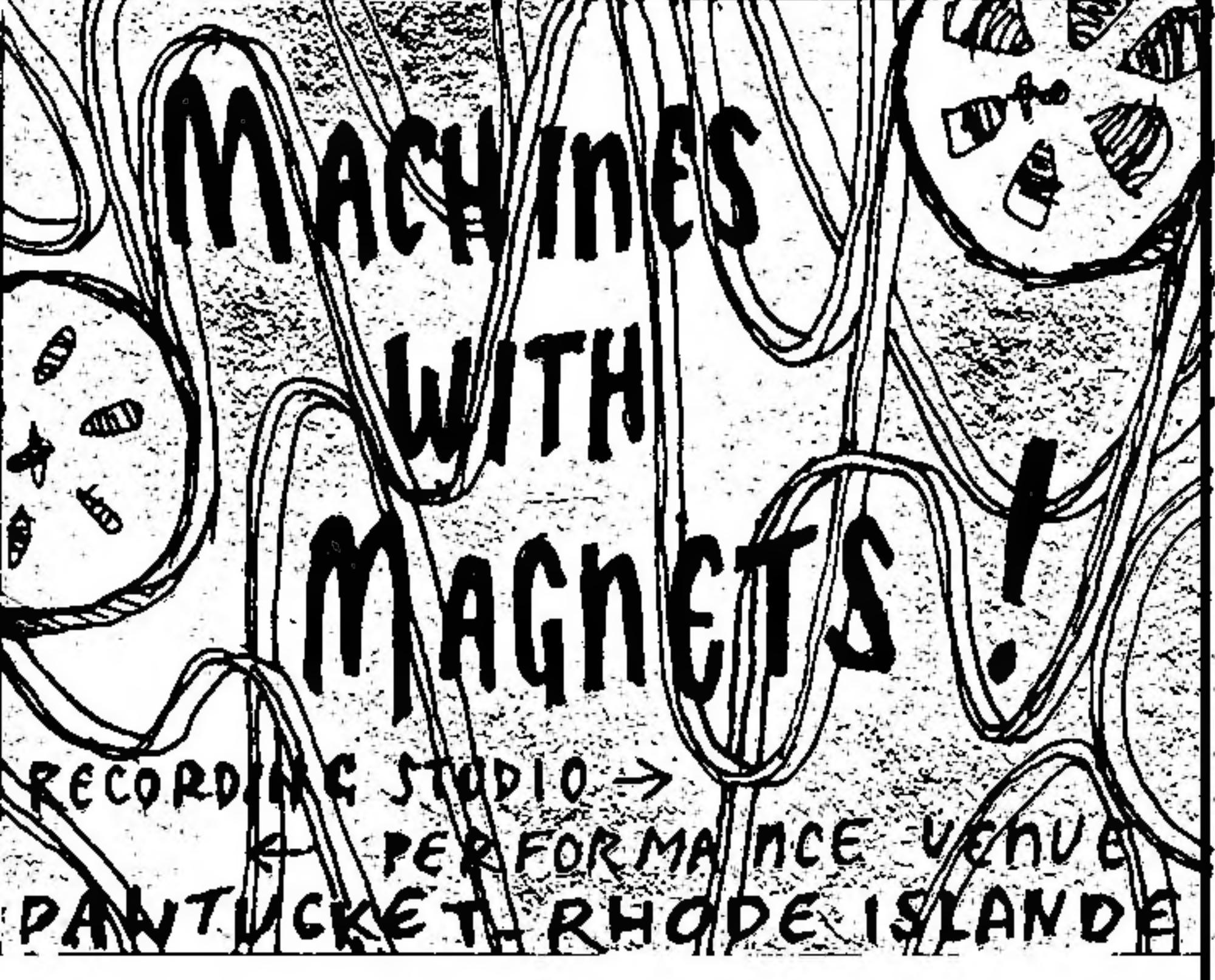
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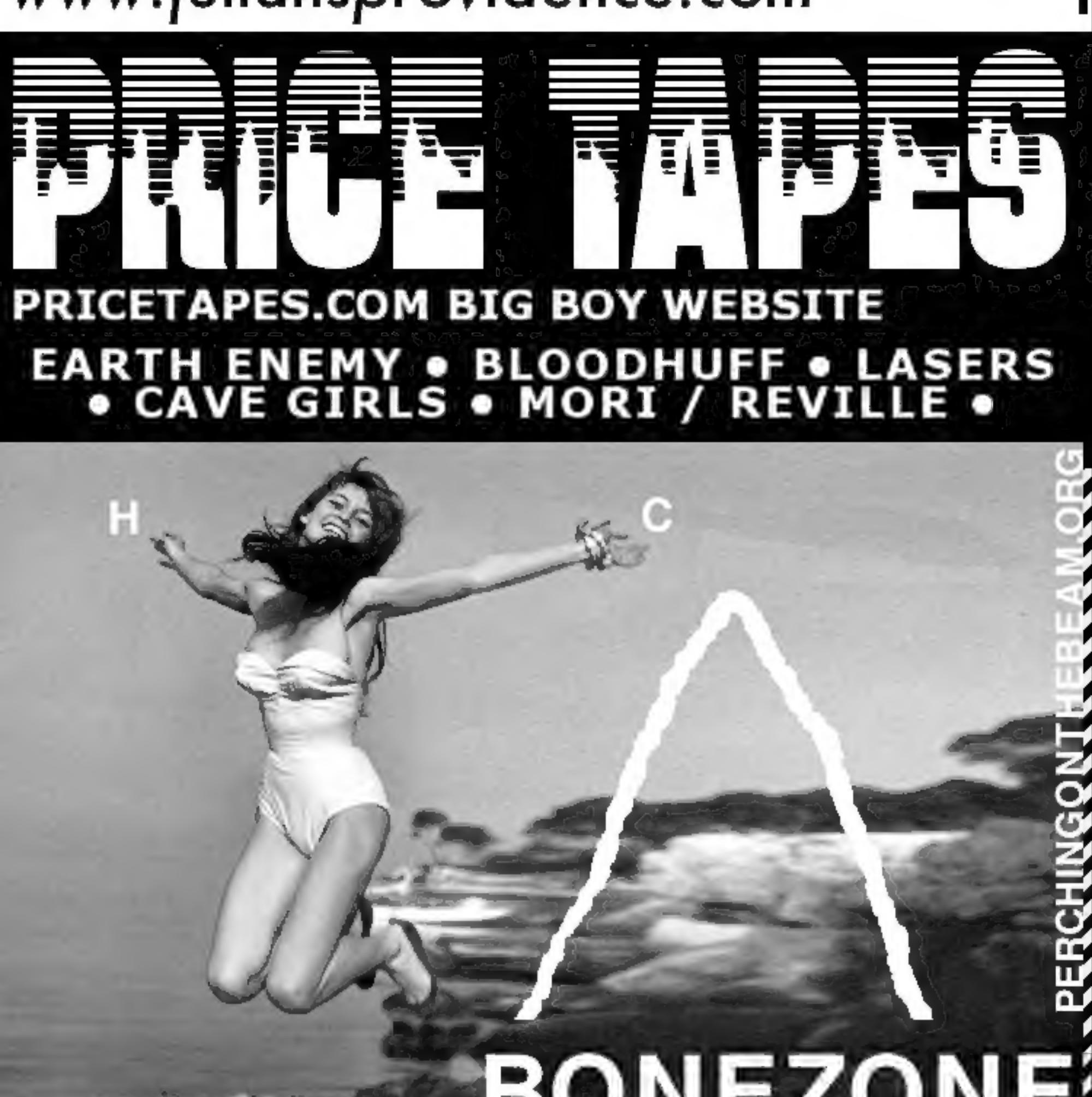
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Dear Tomato Bread

NEGATIVE ZERO: THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN

DEAR TOMATO BREAD

Despite having effectively no money forever, I got one of those touch screen phones (the kind with apps). I got it third-hand, passed from buddy to buddy, because the pause button that freezes the screen's input function and makes you not butt-dial people, was broken. My solution (actually my second solution, after "not care", which proved difficult) was to turn on the calculator function when I was done sending a text or whatever. That way when the phone was in my pocket, rather than accidentally calling an ex roommate and telling them "[sound of metal money]", I was doing random computations. I found it to be very satisfying knowing that this fairly robust computer was in my pocket all the time tirelessly punching up elaborate and essentially infinite problems, and not to be all "what's it all about", but it put my life into a pleasant relief. SO you can imagine my bewilderment when I pulled the damn thing out of my pocket one day and found that the current state of the calculation displayed -0 !!!!!!!

AAAAAAAARRGH what is -0???? alternately is my phone broken sincerely
CONFUSED

DEAR CONFUSED

Before consulting Wikipedia, I ruminated and meditated on the idea "negative zero" for a good solid day and a half: what it could mean regular, and what it could mean relative to a human life. Like you (sort of?), I came up with nothing. My understanding of the number line was that positive numbers go off infinitely in one direction and negative numbers infinitely the other way, and zero is certainly in the center. I thought maybe "phone is broken".

I LOOKED IT UP

As it turns out, negative zero is real, and while it is not used in everyday math (where for most uses $-0 = 0$), it is computationally valuable (and hence, psychologically valuable). Negative zero is the inverse of negative infinity, which is important because otherwise the inverse of infinity and the inverse of negative infinity would both equal the same thing, 0, so infinity and negative infinity would be the same, which they kind of are, but whatever, I'm not going to nonsplit anti-hairs. Also negative zero is what infinitesimal negative numbers round up to (infinitesimal positive numbers round down to positive zero).

The crazy thing is that negative zero is a number that implies motion towards. Despite being nothing, negative zero comes with the information that it is coming up from less than nothing. Let's say we're talking about temperature in Celcius, where zero means frozen water. If water is zero celcius and frozen, it is negative zero. If it's zero and still water, it is positive zero. Negative zero dollars is how much money you have when you have just paid off all hanging debts, and have no money. Negative zero comes with the information that it hung out at less than zero for a second.

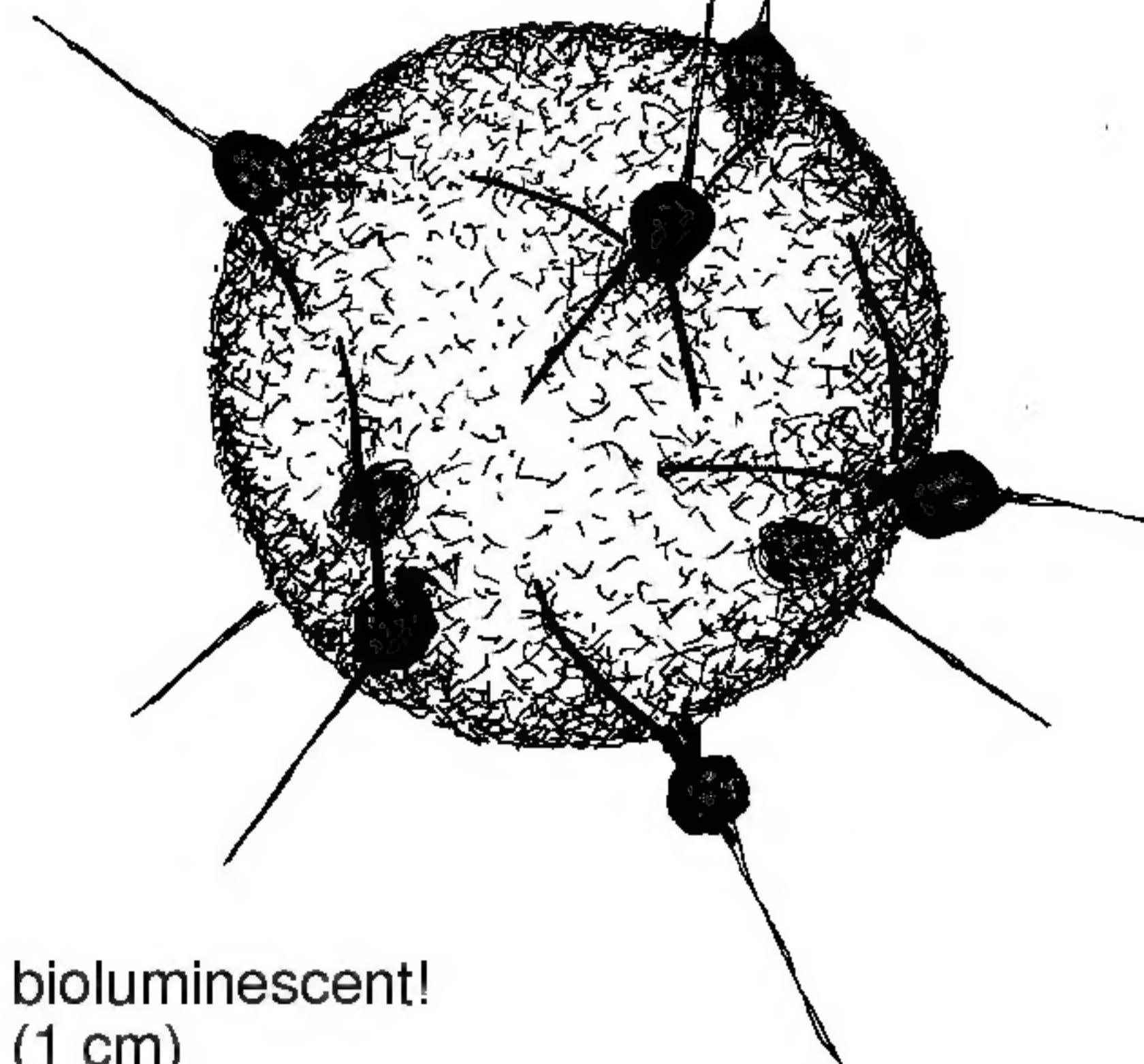
So what does this mean? Well, it's important to remember that generally numbers kind of don't do this: in most situations a number describes a point on the line, not a point with movement towards. Or to put it another way, usually a number will tell you how many of a thing there are, not also how many of a thing there used to be, or how many of a thing whatever many of things want there to be of things. Apparently a lot of weird stuff happens around zero, on the cusp of being.

OK, here's a direction to take this: You know how people say "i don't know" to mean "no"? Like you say "do you want to go drink a seltzer with me" and they're like "I don't know..."? Well if you think about 0 being "0 bits of information", then +0 is like "i secretly know but am being polite" and -0 is like "i honestly don't know, so let's do it and i'll find out". Right?

Sincerely,

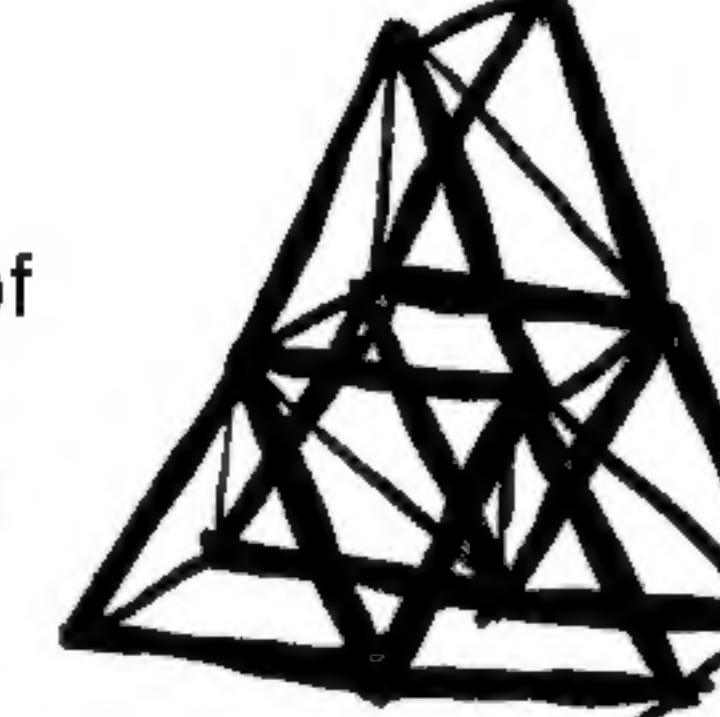
Tomato Bread

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AYYYYYY

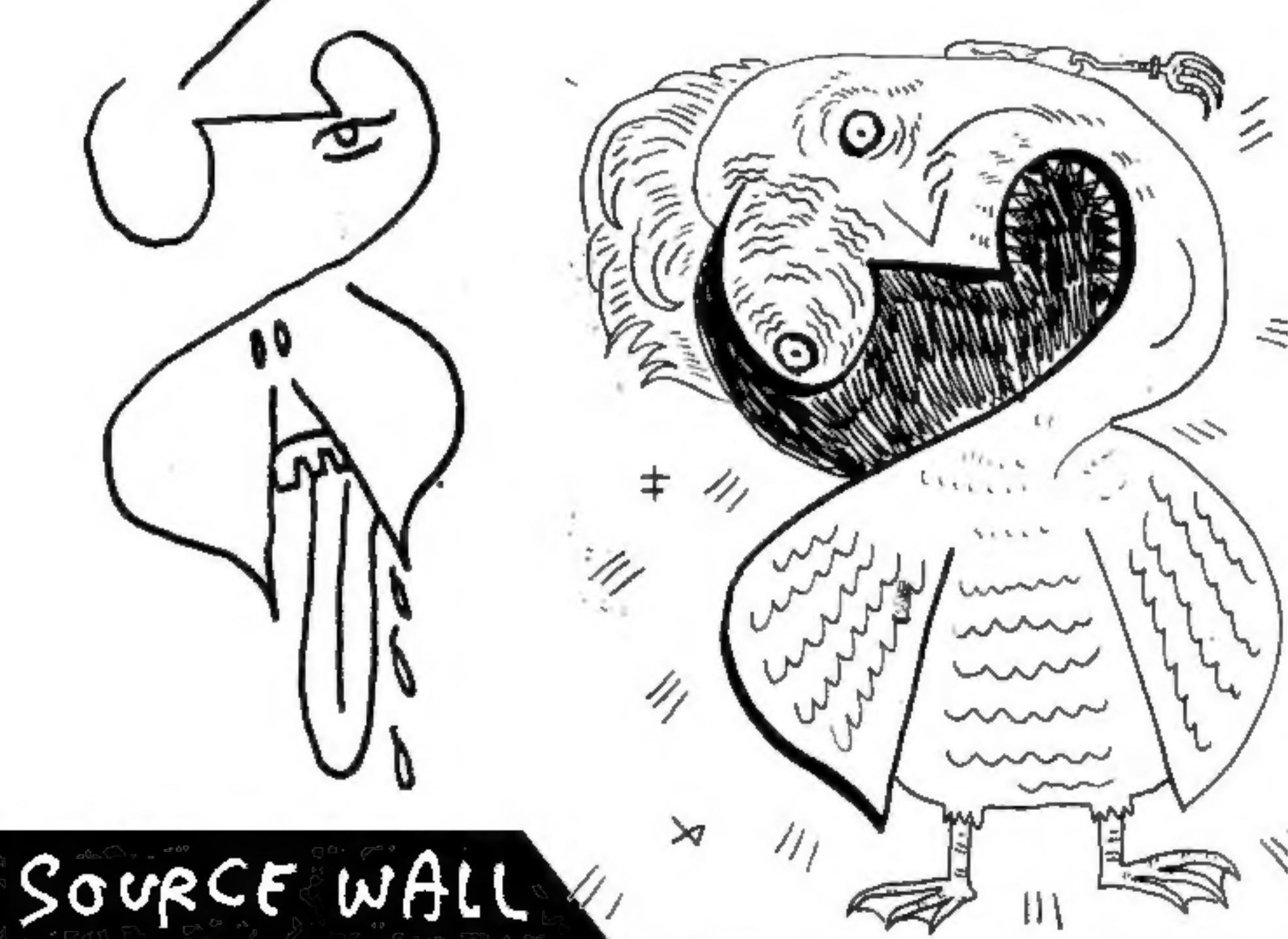
TINTO is a professional scientist and amateur

resurrectionist, currently living in North Carolina.

LAST MONTH'S LINE-O-GRAF WINNERS

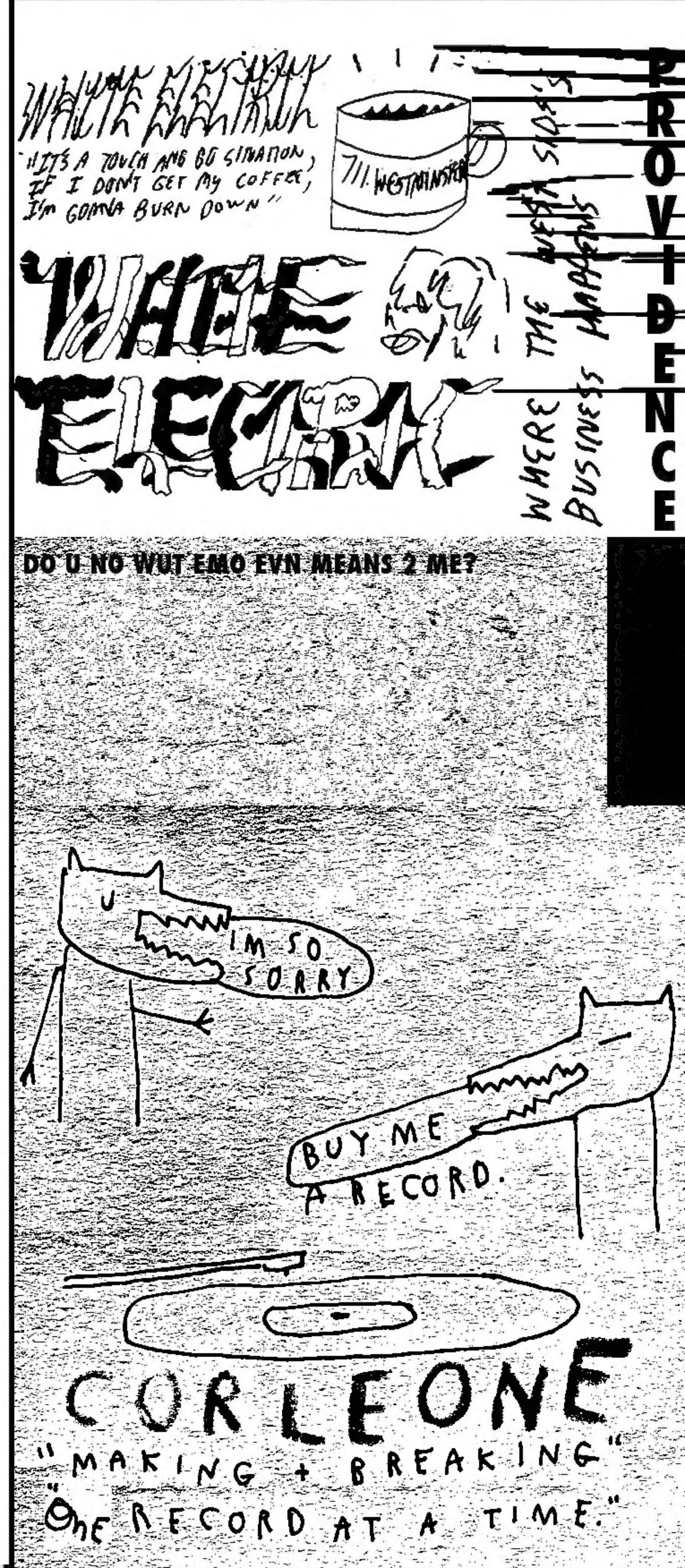
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SOURCE WALL is a randomly generated table of 144 alphabetic characters. There are many different ways to use such a table- you could use it to select a random password, you could use it to create a month-long cipher solvable only by others with access to this issue of Mothers News (<http://tinyurl.com/D9O8O7N8K2J3J9E4>), you could search for words and near-words that may be relevant to your life, you can use it to select a new name- there are literally infinite methods of use. For disbelievers in astrology who see the benefit of being guided by a truly random block of text assigned to a specific time period, SOURCE WALL may prove especially useful.

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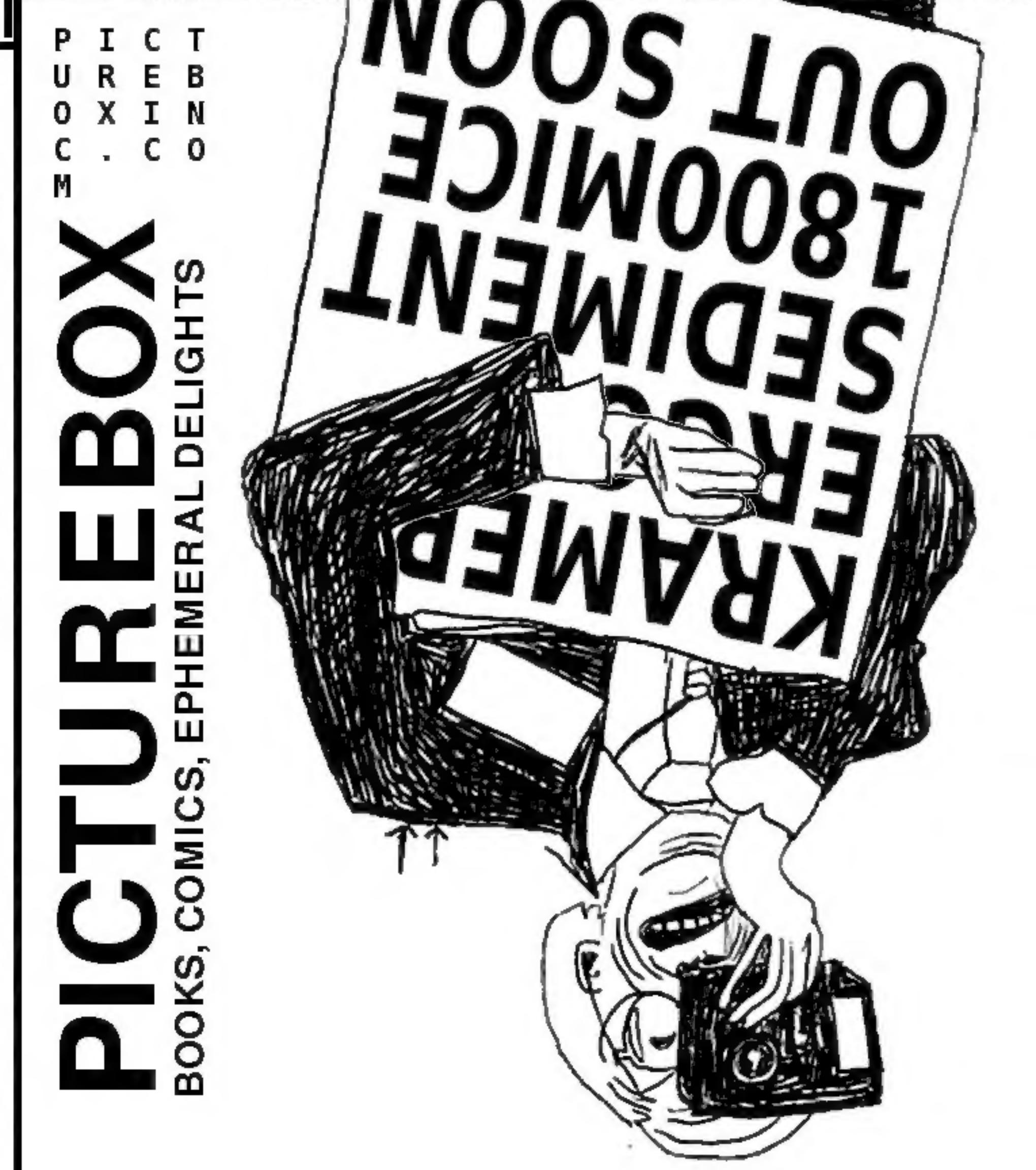
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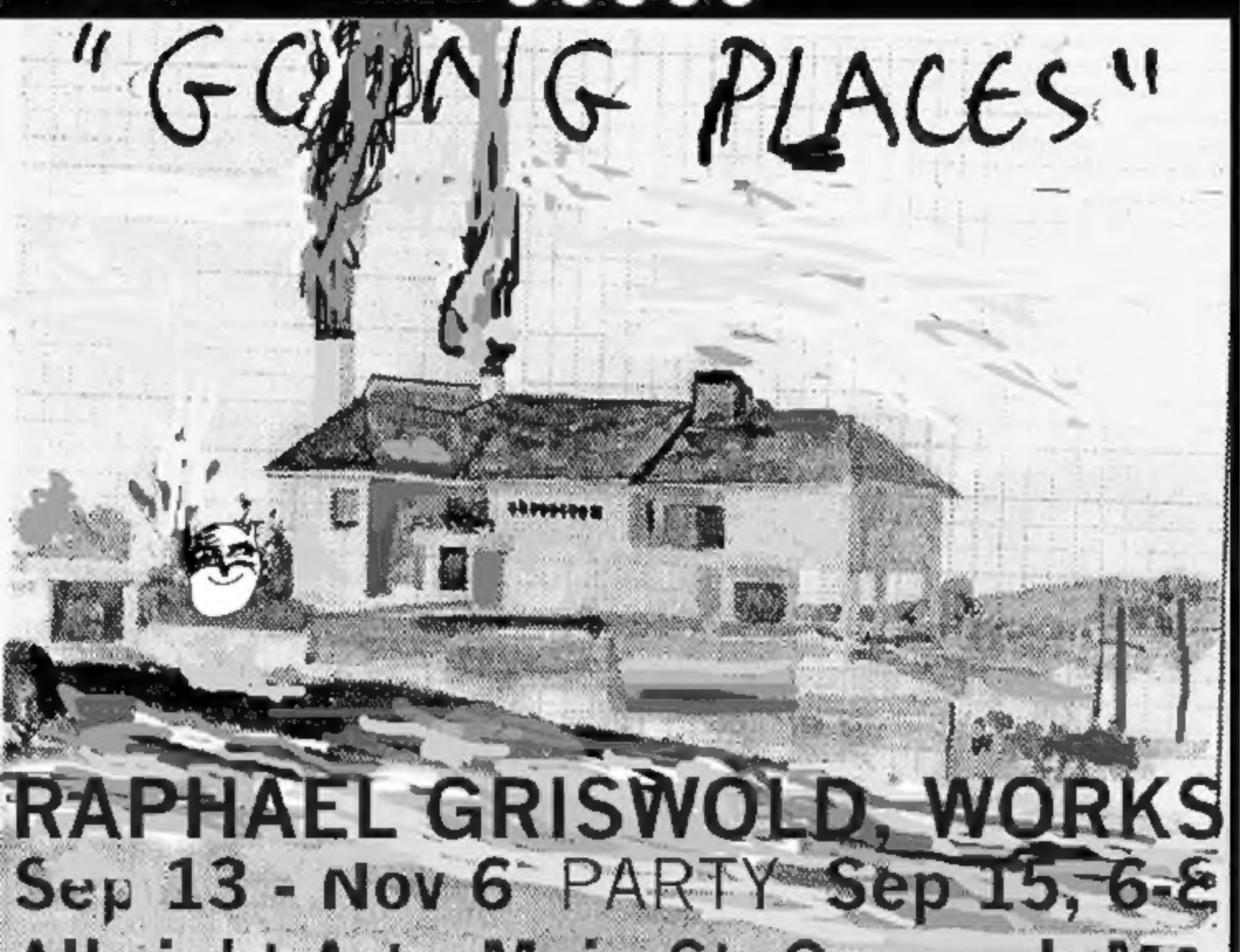
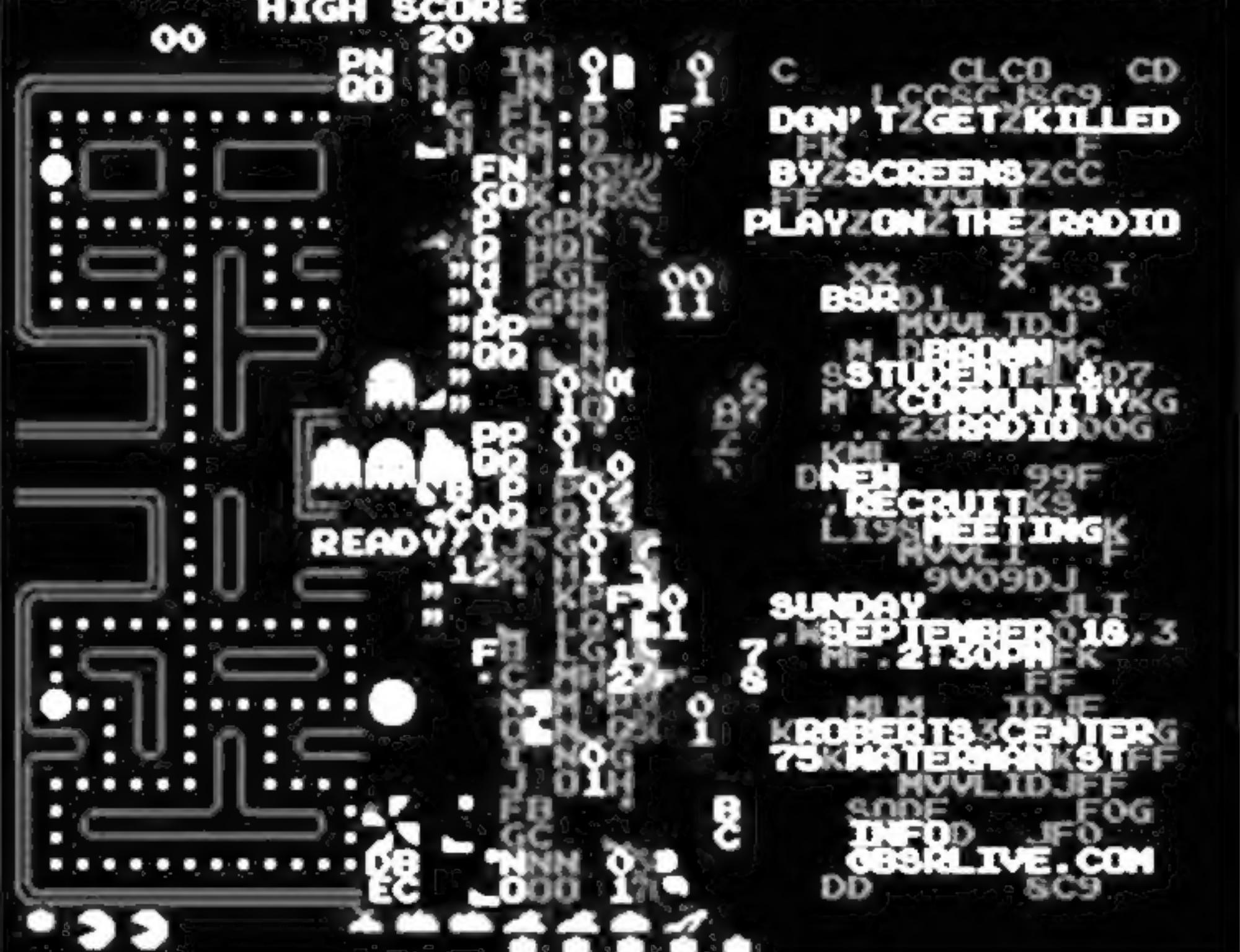


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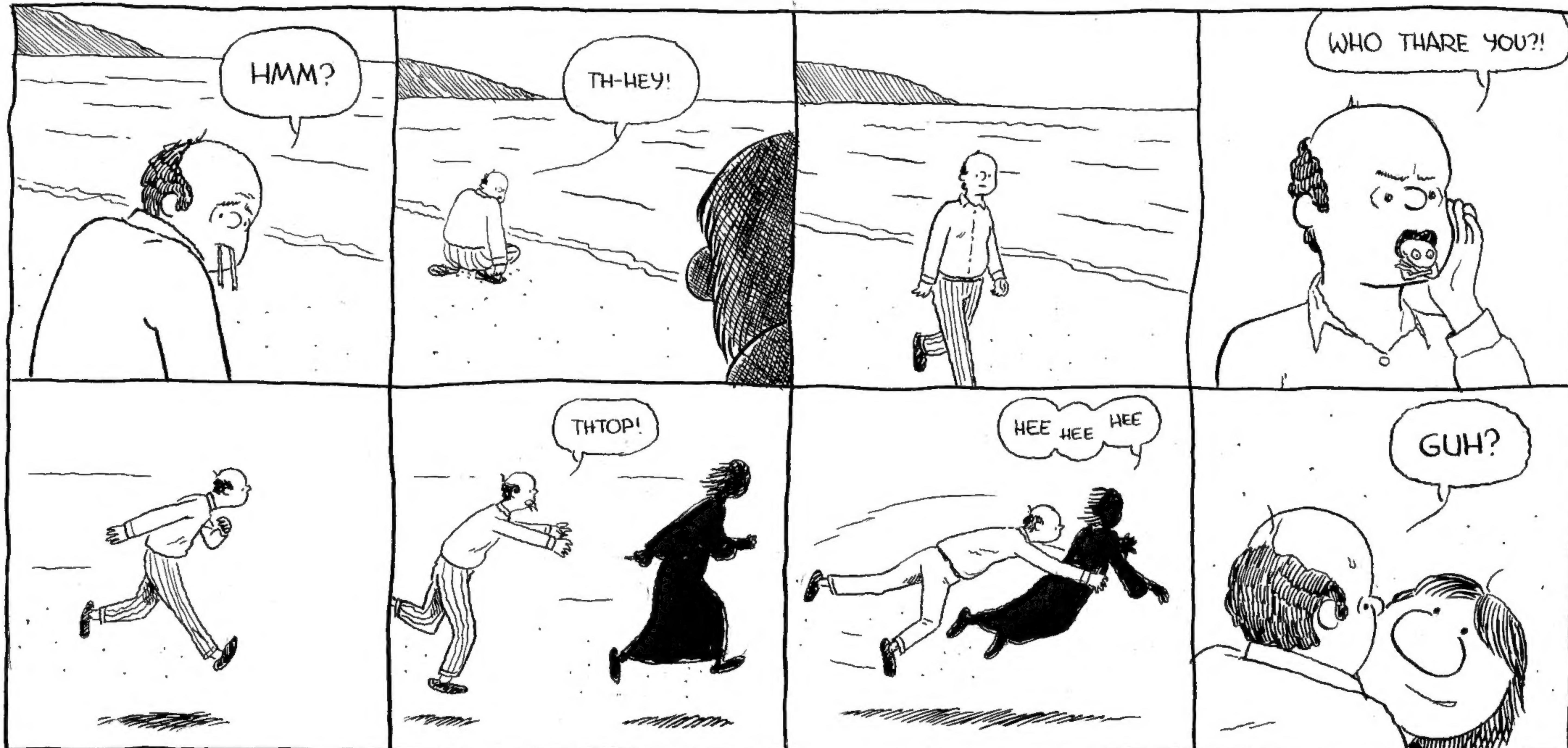
COMICS PAGE

GRAVEYARD DUCKS by Mickey Zucchini



GRAVEYARD DUCKS is about a bunch of ducks that live in a graveyard. There is also a pond.

WITCH BEACH by Charles Forsman



Recently in Witch Beach: Stephen the powerless patriarch has been suffering after his cool witch wife Eleanor turned his tongue into a frog. He went to the beach to cry.



THE SAINT by Kate Schapira

So he was always called Harold Bluetooth so as not to be mixed up with the other Harolds.

They sat at the counter in listed order. The miscreant's hand was closed on something. A boy's name is what matters to him; otherwise he need not look up.

"The Many Names of Boys"

Thousands and thousands of boys crop up like snowdrops, like video aliens, outside the scraped grass. Each is named, usually after a saint, so they can know whom to live up to.

Kate Schapira's THE SAINT is an examination of Saints and Saintliness, told one saint at a time, a different saint each month. No pictures on purpose!

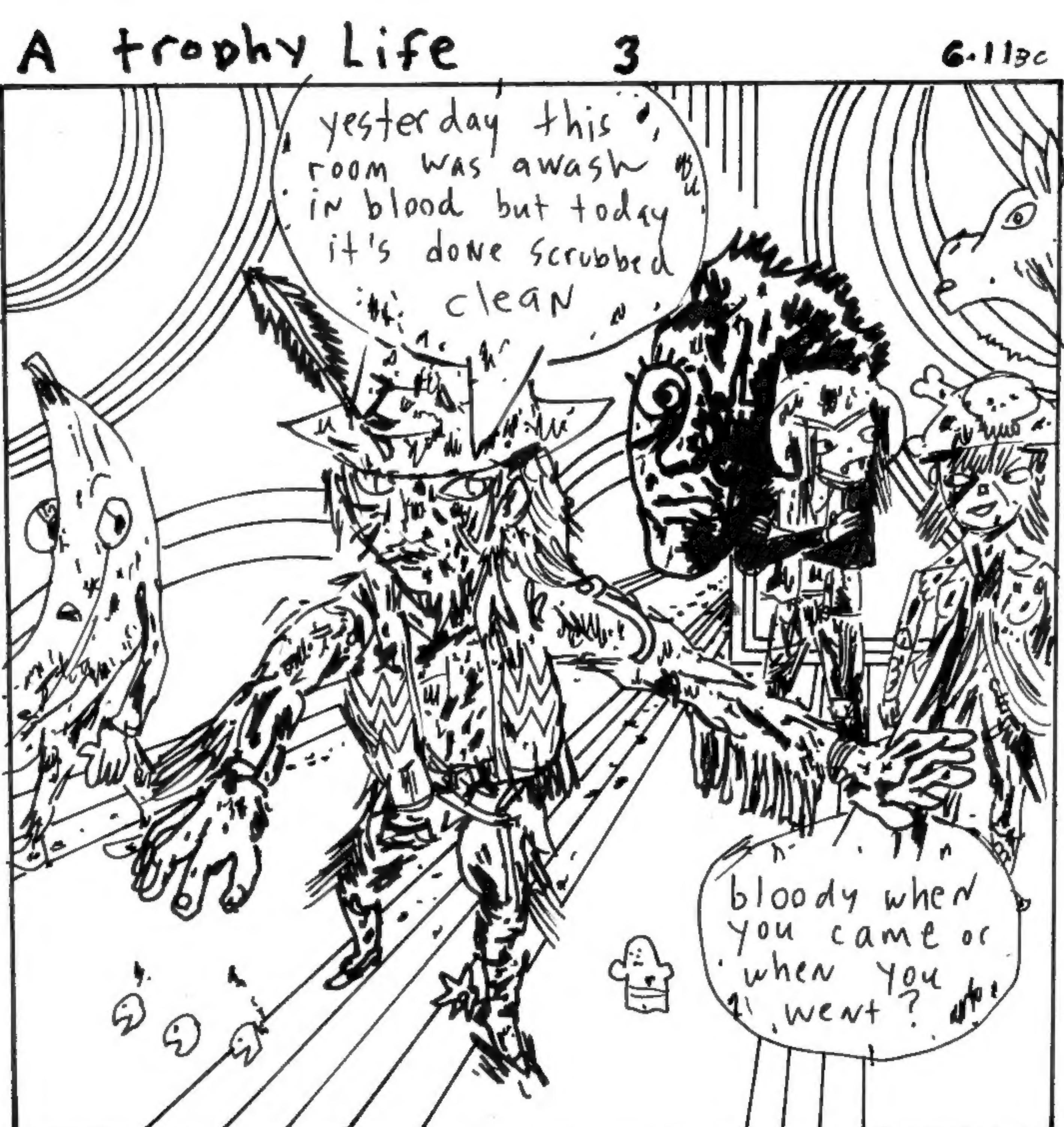
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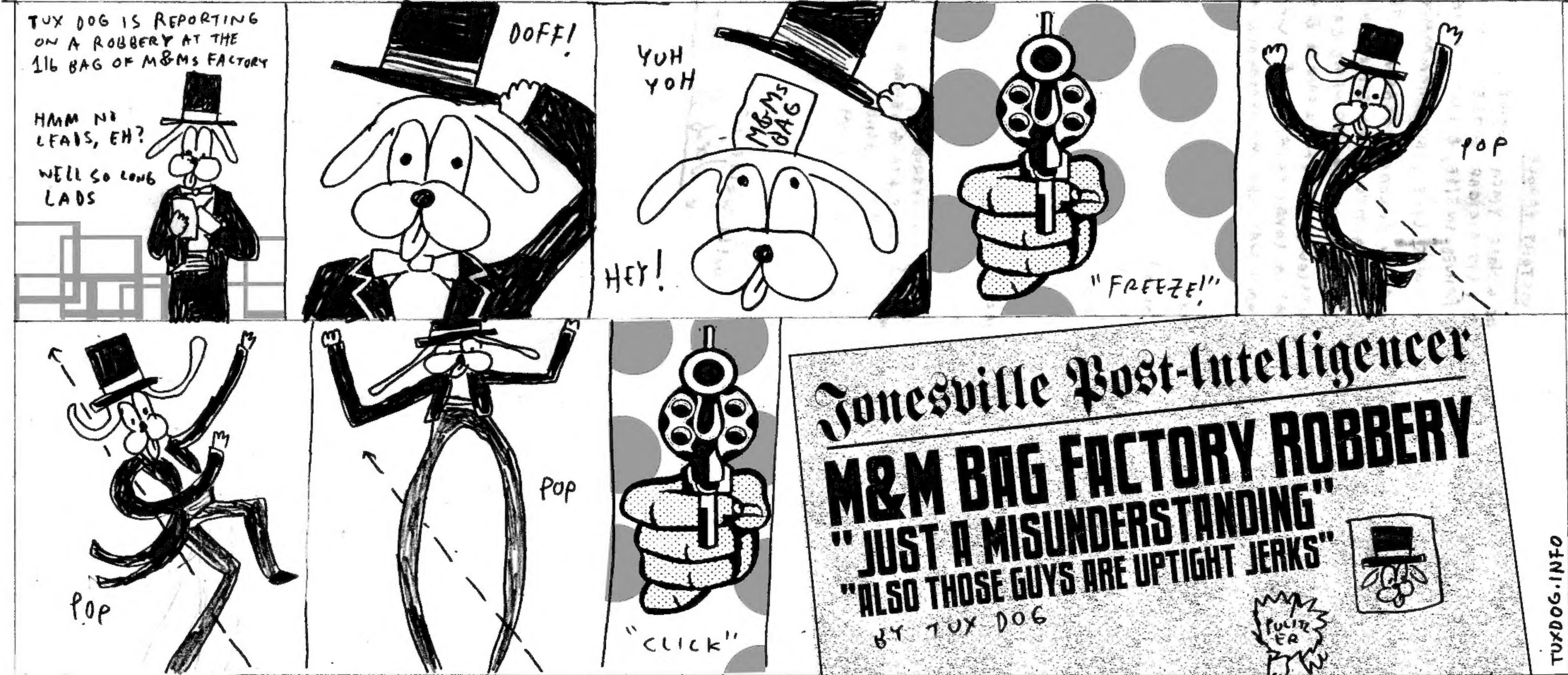
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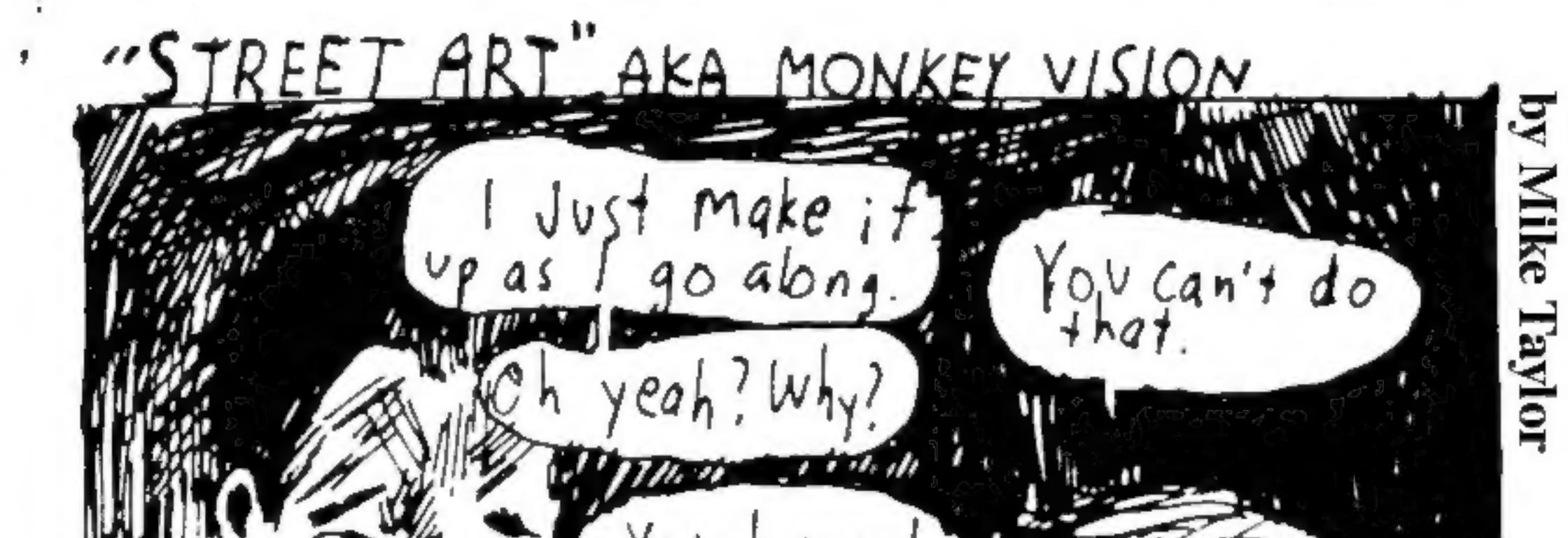
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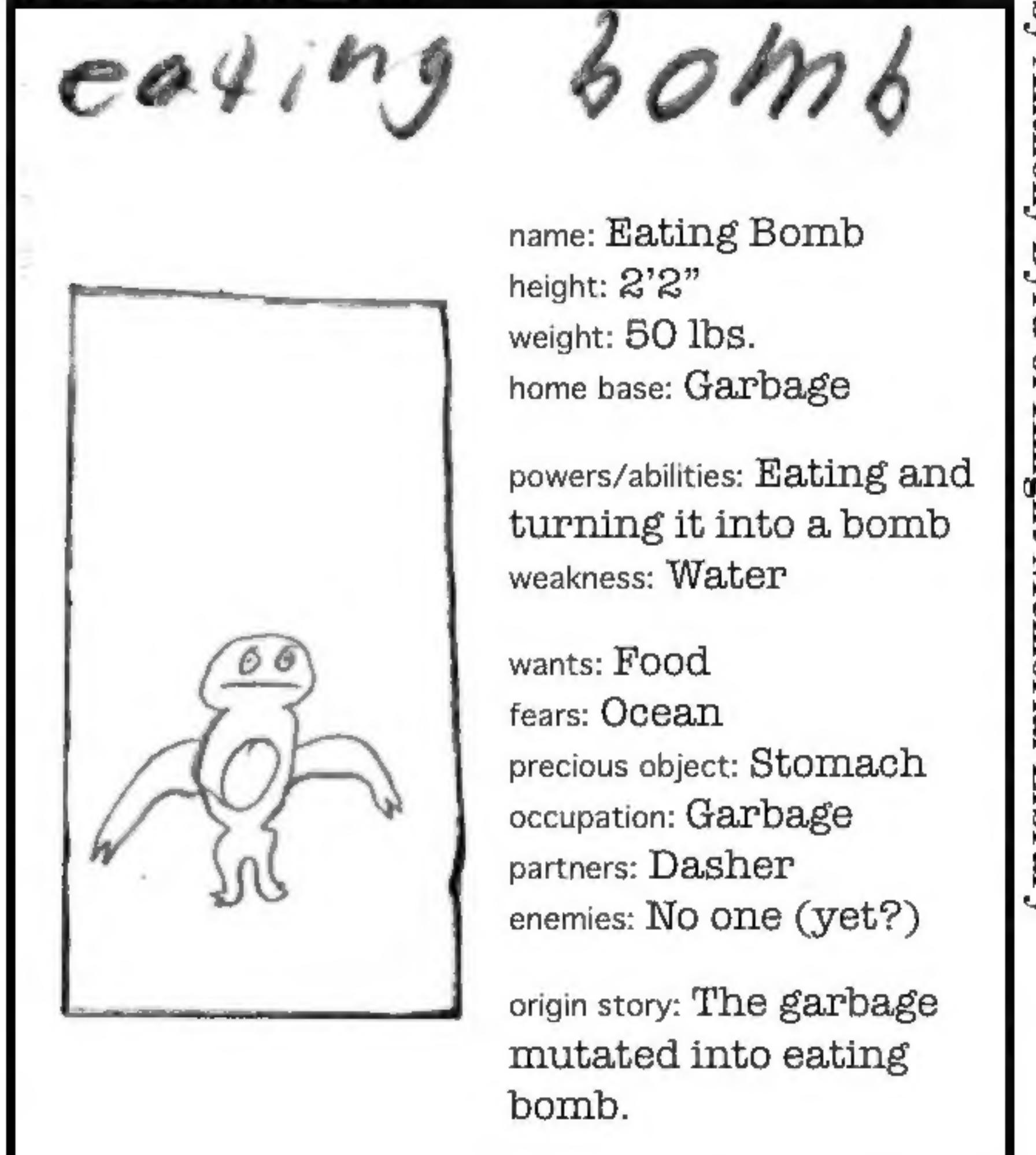
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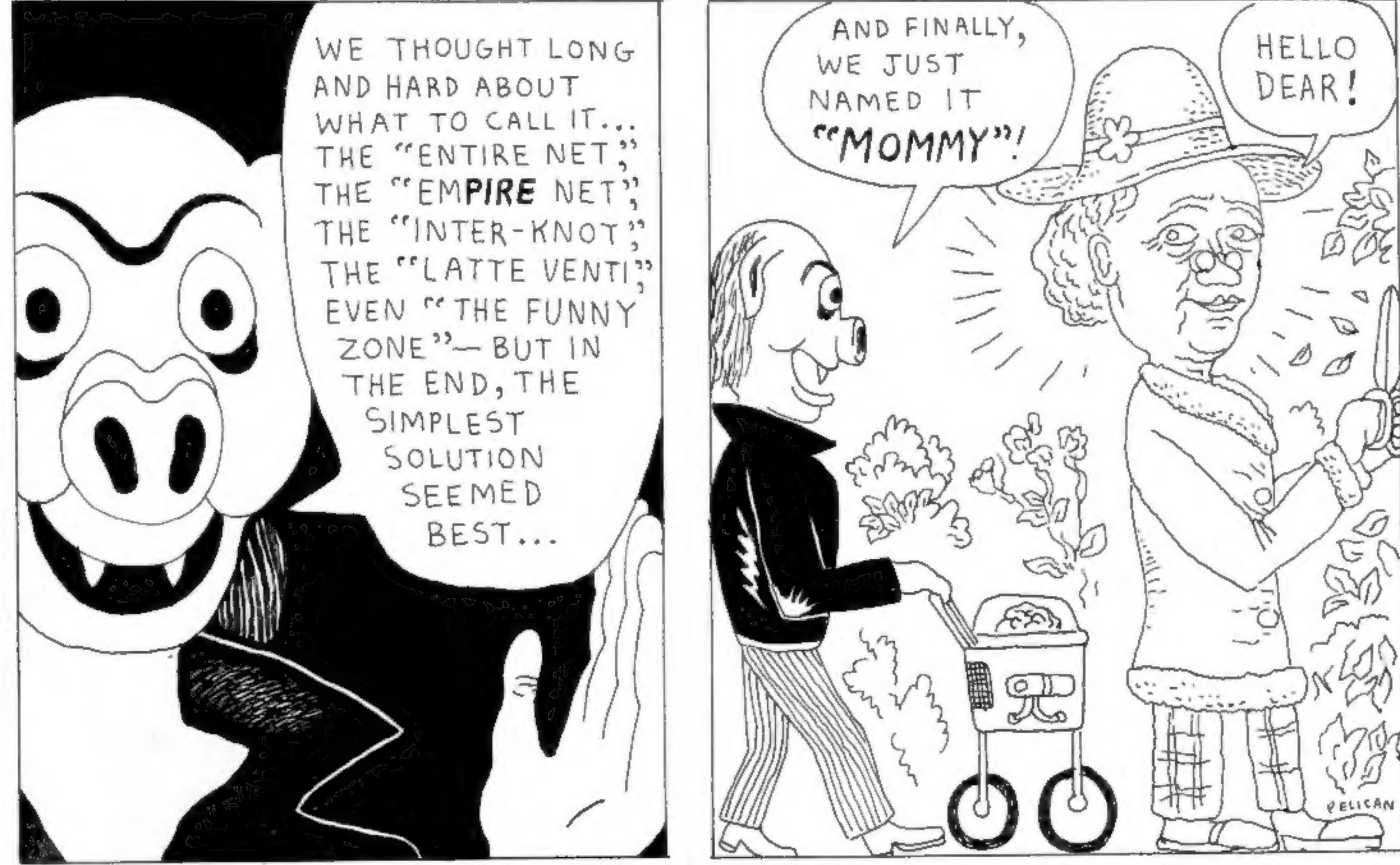
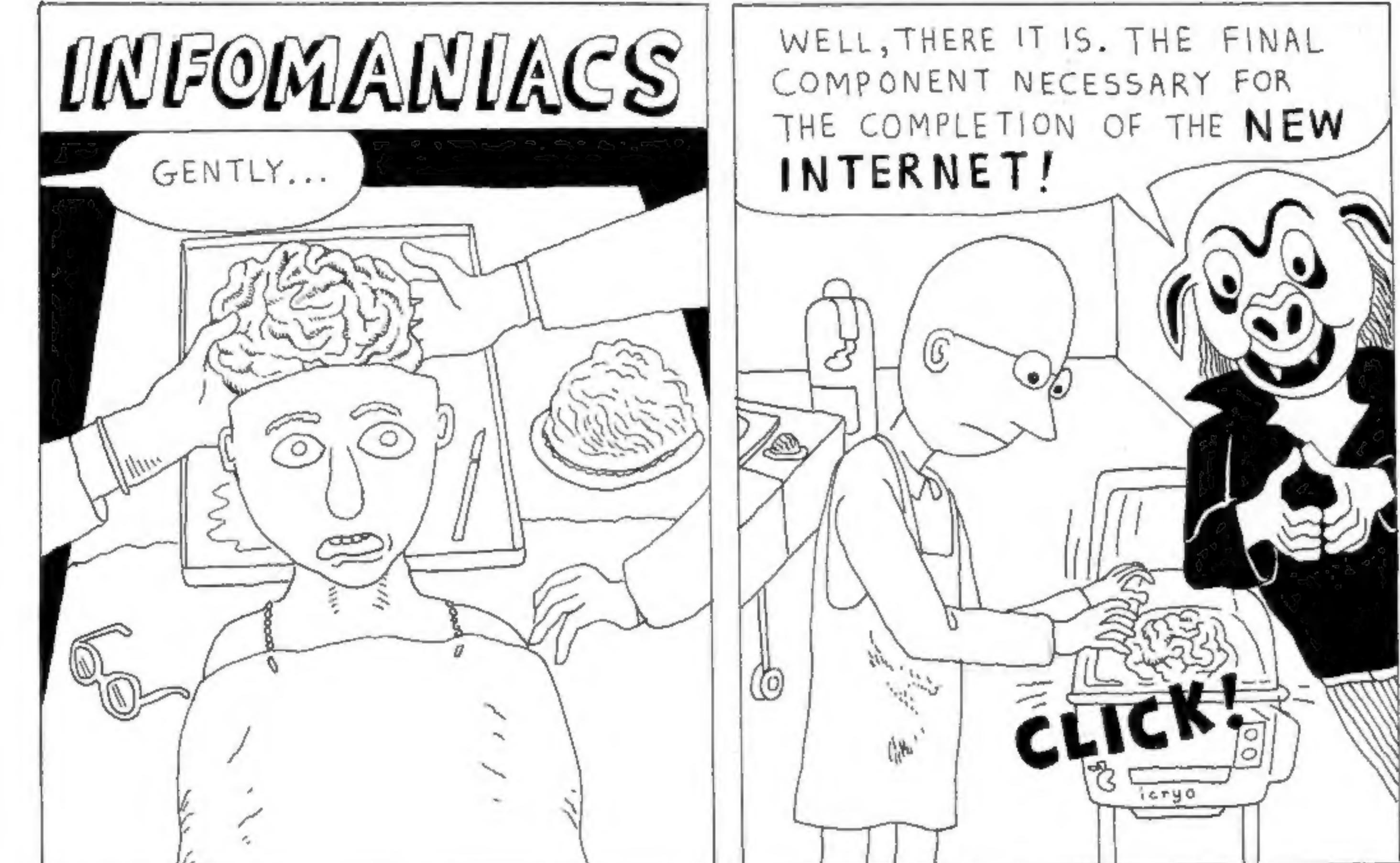
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


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INFOMANIACS by Matthew Thurber





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GOSSIP SECTION

by Josephine Mendes

Hi everyone wow cool last month huh? I mean last month was cool, we went out and did stuff, wow... looking back I feel like 80% of my time was under intermittent fluorescent lighting outdoors on white vinyl... that was my feeling... good feeling... hey speaking of a good feeling guess what everyone likes? Karaoke... notable hits: TOMMY BUBU "do u like pina coladas", SARAH RIDER [self-styled Ludacris medley over "it takes 2" woo-ha beat], and NICKY REV'S "we didn't start the fire". The craziest thing at the karaoke thing was KYLIE AMBULANCE singing that JOE JACKSON song to AI ISSHIKI like "Ai Isshiki going out with him? Ai Isshiki gonna take him, home, to-nite?". Ah... we ate that shit up... Music is the healing force of the universe... Hey have you seen LEXIE MOUNTAIN's new car? And more important to the narrative, have you wondered where the money for it came from? Also, did you also look closely at the credits for SHREK 4? HMMMM? Interesting... Yo Lexie hook me up with that Mike Myers money, I gotta get a tooth filled... Hey speaking of an unfilled gap, ALEE PEOPLES and STOLTZ got across the country OK, but I guess it took 12 days because STOLTZ insisted they stop in every state to get TWIZZLERS because they supposedly taste different from state to state? Which I guess they do but I think that has more to do with what you wash them down with... Hey, I'm not Joey Twizzler, I don't know... If STOLTZ is gonna go to the bat for this, OK... Hey HANNAH ABELOW has a new apartment that's pretty nice, it's above a hat shop and underneath... another hat shop! Her apartment is an apartment sandwich on hat shop bread! You know what they say, "As Abelow, So Aabove".... Hey I keep seeing @MANDYSEZZ at shows in Providence and I stand right behind her and have loud dumb conversations but she never tweets me. Honestly unsure how to feel about this... / Good news everyone- JONES CHANDLER has resurfaced! Everytime I see him nowadays he's eating tiny bags of gourmet jellybeans, and he gives me a tiny bag of jellybeans, and we both eat tiny bags of jellybeans together... "Where does he get the jellybeans?" you ask? On that subject alone he really clams up... And hey speaking of clams, you guys tried that new clam energy drink? SOPHIE HENDRY was drinking it at the MIRROR/DASH show... It's weird though, because I thought everything with clams already had energy in it? Did clams never have energy in them and now they do? Someone tell me how food works now, IRDK... DAVEY HARMS (previously "HOT HANDS") has a new nickname for Fall... "X-CLAW"... pretty sick... Sick show the other night at the Obscure Entertainment Complex here in Olneyville- I don't remember who played but beforehand I watched CATMAN MEOWSKI draw a cat's face in sharpie perfectly on the back of his own shaved head... Hey I keep getting s3xY spam messages from EILEEN WU, it's pretty cool... Eileen don't even delete that account, let us dream... let everyone in your address book dream that you are trying to sell us something with "margarita" in the title that isn't a margarita... hey speaking of beautiful dreams, are they making AVATAR 2 or what? I want to see more blue people on screen STAT and no, Smurfs don't count. I almost went to see the Smurfs movie, then I didn't, then I realized that I'm living in the alternate reality of the alternate reality JOSEPHINE MENDES who DID see the Smurfs, and wishes she DIDN'T... other me: u suck... Other mes on the Smurfless universe possibility branch... we rule... u[s] go girl[s]... Hey speaking of me ruling, am I the only one who stole a smoky kiss at the ALEX THE DANCER kissing booth? Stealing is (generally) bad, but my conscience is clear- I figured that if I did it people would think it was a cool thing to do, and they'd make more money for teenage vampires who can't read or whatever they were trying to raise money for, I forget / never knew... I've been known to topple a single domino... hey, JENINE BREASTNERD came back from Peru with (duh) colorful clothes, plus very pleasant food descriptions. after we talked I went to the kitchen inspired, and I really thought I was innovating something real wild, urban, and dangerous, but then I stepped back and it was just potato salad... still good... Hey MOTHERS NEWS cartoonists CHUCK FORSMAN and MELISSA MENDES (no relation) moved out of bArf City to the woods of Western Mass, like almost New York... frown face... this 10% confirms my theory that Chuck is a wolfperson who needs to be periodically locked in a cabin. Hey all you good people out there... GOOD LUCK!

PSSST! Mother's Good Word this month is PEPTIDE. If anyone asks you for "Mother's Good Word", that's what it is. And if you need a semi-public password for any reason, and you need it to expire in a month, please use Mothers Good Word.

IMAGE ATTRIBUTION

Corleone, Julian's, and tiny Showcase ads by Shea'la Finch. Machines with Magnets ad by Ian Cozzens. White Electric and Chelsea Culp ads by Tom B.U.B.U.L. McInnis ad by John Singer Sargent. All other ads by the people who paid for them or Jackie H Curtiss.

HAT TIPS

HT to Ca\$hman for "gold frame napoleon" riff. HT to Curtin Brothers for "[x] sandwich on [y] bread" riff.

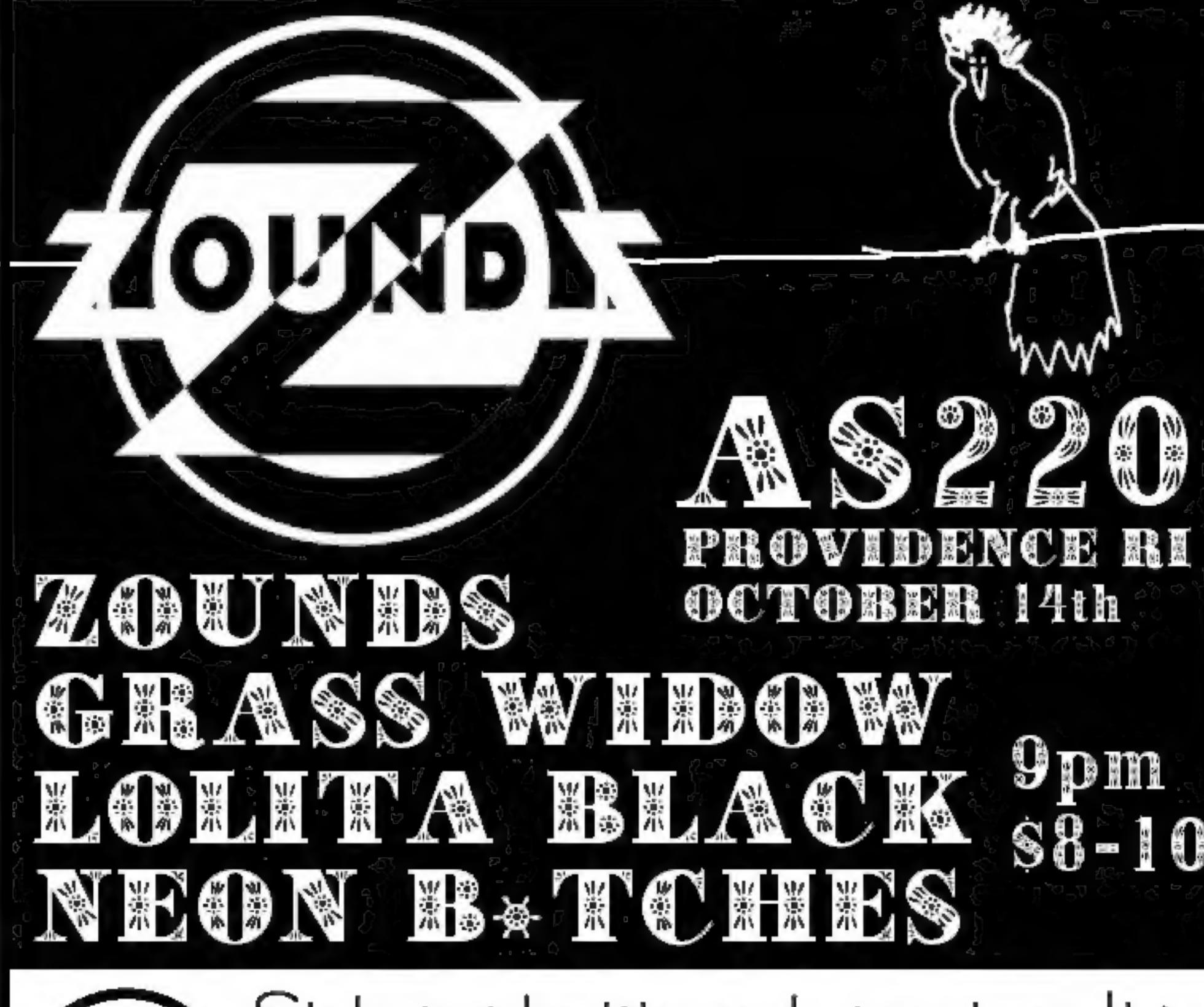
MOTHERS NEWS will return in one month with a 12 page HALLOWEEN SHITCOMEDY OF TERRORS!!!!!! coming in November: Mothers News Literary Supplement.



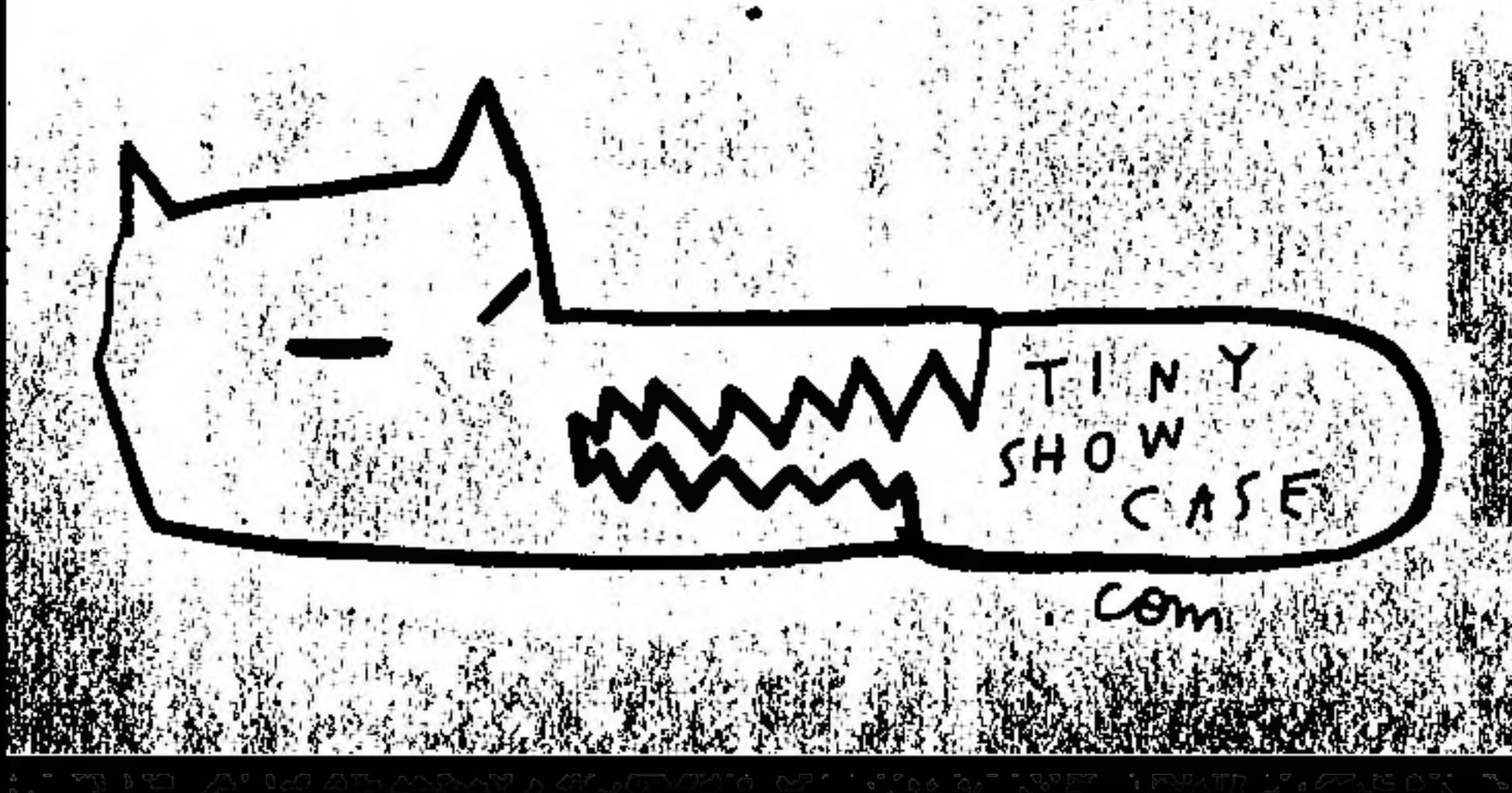
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Style is identity and signature. It is the antithesis of critical adventure. Celebrated artists are failures in this regard. If they were truly creative their first act would be to dispense with such redundancies and change their own work. Ignore them they are the dispossessed.



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